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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0091
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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: SAUD AL-FAISAL: MORE US ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON
NEEDED

REF: BEIRUT 1468

Classified By: DCM DAVID RUNDELL, REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SATISFIED WITH SLEIMAN: Saudi FM Saud Al-Faisal touched briefly on Lebanese President Michel Sleiman's October 12-13 visit to the Jeddah during a meeting with Ambassador Fraker on October 18. Saud reported that King Abdallah was "very impressed" with Sleiman and that the visit went "very well" from the Saudi perspective. Saud assesses that Sleiman will "stick to the independence of Lebanon" and that his "heart is in the right place and his efforts are moving in the right direction."

¶2. (C) MORE ASSISTANCE NEEDED: Sleiman needs both economic and military assistance, Saud noted. Saudi Arabia is doing its part, and the Prince urged the US to provide additional military assistance to the Lebanese Army. The Ambassador responded that the US had already provided \$410 million in assistance to the military in the last year. Saud acknowledged this but added, without providing more specifics, that the Lebanese Army had some outstanding requests for equipment that "had not been forthcoming." He also asserted that some of the equipment the U.S. had provided "was not what was needed."

¶3. (C) ELECTIONS KEY TO CONTAINING IRAN: Beyond this, Saud remarked that next year's elections would be key to Lebanese stability, and said that Lebanon's friends needed to coordinate now to deny Iran greater influence. Though he was encouraged by reports that a recent move by Tehran to appoint a deputy to Hassan Nasrullah apparently without prior consultations had created a rift within Hizballah. Iran is "its own worst enemy," Saud commented.

¶4. (C) MUM ON SYRIA: The Saudi FM said nothing about Syria's recent decision to establish diplomatic relations with Lebanon, and pretended not to know anything about the SAG's failure to condemn the September 27 bombing in Damascus. "Didn't we issue a statement?" he asked, turning to Western Affairs Khalid Jindan, who replied that he "wasn't sure," since he had also been out of the country at the time. Comment: Prince Saud and Jindan were at the UNGA in New York at the time, where they would have been hard pressed to ignore news of the bombing. More likely the Saudis have heard rumors that the US is exploring renewed contacts with Syria and want to avoid being pressed to pursue their own "reconciliation" with Damascus. End comment.
FRAKER